A

# DISSERTATION

ON

# VIRGIL'S DESCRIPTION

OF THE

# ANCIENT ROMAN PLOUGH;

Which although myſterious, and hitherto undiſcovered by any of the Commentators, yet is now entirely illucidated, by a cloſe Compariſon between the above, and a Repreſentation on the Reverſe of an undoubted Unique.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

Critical Objections againſt the PLOUGHS of Mr. SPENCE and MARTYN, manifeſtly ſhewing them to be entirely erroneous.

BY A. J. DES CARRIERES.

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M.DCC.LXXXVIII.

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ON

# ANCILIS: DESCRIPTION

OF THE

# ANCIENT ROMAN [illegible]

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

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BY A. J. DESS CARRIERES.

LONDON:

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MDCCLXXVIII.

TO

SIR JOSEPH BANKS, Bart.

Preſident of the ROYAL SOCIETY.

SIR,

IT is with infinite pleaſure and ſatisfaction, that I dedicate the following diſcoveries, to a gentleman who has ſo highly enrich'd the world with his own. The following treatiſe, ſomewhat removing that thick and impenetrable veil, which time hath thrown over the perfections of the ancients afford us, tho' by a

mere glimpſe, ſo grand a proof of the ſkill, knowledge, and attainments, acquired by the former ages of the *old world*, as nearly raiſes our ſurpriſe and admiration to the ſame height we experienc'd on the diſcovery of a *new one*; in which you ſo nobly bore a part, and have enrich'd the world with it's treaſures.

It muſt afford no ſmall regret to ſo enlighten'd and ſearching a mind, in tracing by thoſe faint lights that guide our reſearches, the progreſſion and advancement of knowledge from the firſt periods of time, to obſerve, what an immenſe chaſm has been fill'd up with the mere attainment of a perfection compleatly known and underſtood, ſo early as the commencement of a period, containing a ſpace of upwards 1700 years.

The modern Plough, which turns up the earth, ſows and harrows at the ſame moment, effects merely what the Romans knew and practiſed ſo long before! This is by no means the only

only proof we have had of their ſuperiority in agriculture, and may lead to ſtill greater improvements in that grandeſt reſult of knowledge of the principles of nature, over whoſe works you preſide, as her chief inveſtigator and patron. "It is plain "that the uſe of marle was known "in this country in the time of the "Romans.—There is alſo proof that "it has been uſed long ſince that "period in many places, where the "farmers know nothing of it now; "a melancholy proof that the art of "huſbandry has declined in the late "ages!"

The following ſheets clearly prove that the Plough, on the reverſe of the unique, hereafter inveſtigated, is undoubtedly that deſcribed by Virgil in his Georgics; at the ſame time overturning the opinions of thoſe critics, who have hitherto treated on the ſame ſubject.

Mr. Holdſworth, who travelled ſeveral times to Italy, for the illuſtration

tion of Virgil, has given no other account than that of a modern Plough now uſed at Mantua, which he falſely ſuppoſes a near reſemblance of the ancient one:—And that which Mr. Spence deſcribes, depoſited in the Jeſuit's college at Rome, ſeems almoſt too ridiculous to be called one.

As for Mr. Martyn's criticiſms upon the ſubject, they are ſo ill founded and undeciſive, that they are ſcarce worth attention. From whence this clearly appears to be an undoubted unique: For was it not, Mr. Holſdworth, who is ſaid to have viſited Italy nine times, would have diſcovered one ſimilar to it in the cabinets of the curious; which weight Mr. Canton permitted me to inſpect, with that freedom and generoſity peculiar to a gentleman, who wiſhes to be beneficial to the works of ingenuity, and the literary world in general.

For

For the explaining any part of Virgil's Poems, muſt afford great ſatisfaction to thoſe who admire them. And who indeed can behold any of thoſe beautiful lines loſt and bury'd beneath the heaps of ill-founded criticiſms, without wiſhing to remove the chaos that obſcures their luſtre!

That you may long enjoy the pleaſure and ſatisfaction of patronizing learning and ingenious men, is the wiſh of,

*SIR,*

*Your much obliged,*

*And humble Servant,*

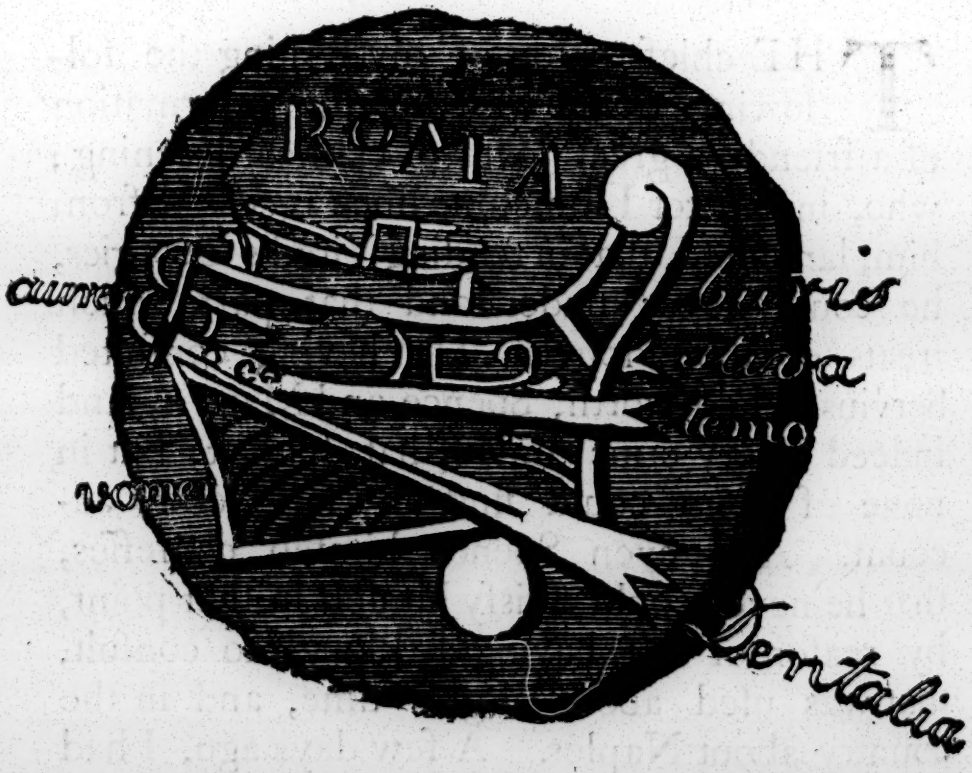
A. J. DES CARRIERES.

A

# DISSERTATION, &c.

THE chief reaſon of my writing the following tract, was for the information of a friend, a great lover of claſſical learning; who, in a letter I ſometime ſince received from him, lamented, that in reading Virgil's Georgics, he could never underſtand that part which treats of the Plough. He having conſulted Servius, Holdſworth, Spence and Martyn, and indeed every critic upon that ſubject, but in none of them could find any ſatisfactory account. And even Spence himſelf confeſſes, that he never could ſatisfy himſelf in that point, by reaſon of not having a Plough to conſult, that was uſed about Virgil's time, and in the country about Naples. A few days ago, I had an undoubted Unique put into my hands, by Mr. John Canton, Maſter of the Academy in

Spital Square, in whoſe poſſeſſion it now is. I then began to think of anſwering my friend's letter, as I thought it now ſufficiently in my power to ſolve his difficulties; nor ſhould I ever have had the boldneſs to have committed the following obſervations to the preſs, if I had not been earneſtly ſolicited by him, who (being pleaſed with them himſelf) thought they might be beneficial to the learned in general. This piece is a Roman weight, weighs four penny weights four grains, is about half an inch in diameter, it has a very fine head of Roma on one ſide, with three points over the




N.B. This is the reverse of a Roman as, front with the well known figure of the Rora navis. The globules or mark of the ounce weight is stamped into the plough wheel. Sic de cæteris. !!!

front of her helmet; and on the reverſe is a Plough, of which you will have a compleat deſcription, as well as compariſon between the above and that deſcribed in the Georgics, in the courſe of this ſmall tract; throughout the whole I had uſefulneſs alone in view: I have not ſo much ſtudied the beauty and elegance of the ſtyle, as I have to join a comprehenſive brevity with diſtinctneſs and perſpicuity; and ſuch as it is, I leave it to the judgment of the impartial and judicious reader.

Mr. Holdſworth tells us, that in the kingdom of Naples, they ſometimes call the wood of the Plough from the point of the handle to the ſhare, ventale, by a corruption from dentale but, is of opinion it is that part only to which the ſhare is fixed. Mr. Dryden has the ſame idea. "And ſink a ſocket for the ſhining ſhare." This evidently is not Virgil's meaning, and cannot be the dentalia, becauſe he ſpeaks in the plural number; beſides it bears no reſemblance to its name. The following I imagine to be the dentalia; a piece of wood faſtened to the croſs bar that joins the two ſides of the Plough together, which Virgil calls the double back, reaching almoſt from the plough-head ſlanting to the tail, on the lower end of which there are three points of iron, ſimilar to thoſe fixed on the front of the helmet of Roma; and towards the upper part is faſtened the plough-ſhare of an angular form, which is called vomer. The dentalia, derives its name from dens a tooth, and was for the purpoſe of breaking the clods, as the plough-ſhare made the furrow. Varrow

ſays, " Pars aratri dentata a figura vocatur & dens, quod eo mordetur terra." The reaſon that Virgil calls his Plough, currus, is partly from its having a wheel under the lower part of the dentalia, and partly from the buris being bent after the manner of the Roman chariots. Mr. Martyn is of opinion that there were two dentalia: I don't ſee where two are poſitively mentioned, they are only ſpoken of in the plural number. Now we find that none of the critics had any idea of the duplex dorſum or double back, to which the dentalia are ſaid to be faſtened. I am of opinion, that the ſtraight part of the buris forms a part of the double back, and that all the bending part of the Plough retains the name of buris; and on the hitherſide of the Plough as repreſented in Plate I. even with the ſtraight part of the buris, is a pole, which I ſuppoſe to be the pole of eight feet in length, which Virgil calls temo; this I imagine forms the other part of the back.

" Huic a ſtirpe pedes temo protentus in octo."

As for the two loop-holes at the head, they are moſt certainly the aures that Virgil mentions; to theſe I ſuppoſe the oxen were faſtened after they were yoked. Mr. Holdſworth ſays, that ſtiva is rather a footboard on which the ploughmen in Italy, even at this day uſually ſtand to guide the Plough; and it is probably ſo called, ſays he, a ſtando. This cannot be Virgil's meaning; for it is ſaid to be an inſtrument, torquere aratrum. Now a footboard, although it may be of infinite ſervice to the ploughman to ſtand upon in that work, yet it can by no means be

ſaid

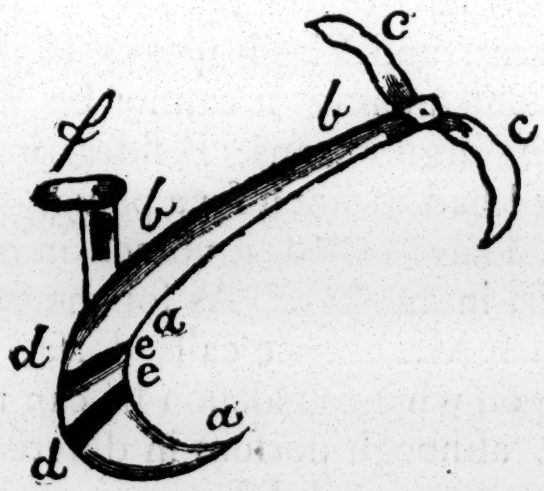
ſaid to turn the Plough. I ſhould imagine that ſmall inſtrument between the double back, near the buris, to be the ſtiva that Virgil deſcribes; and that the reins being thrown over the hook, gave the ploughman power to turn the Plough. As for the work at the ſide, it muſt be undoubtedly for the purpoſe of throwing the ſeed into the earth; but in what manner I will not ſo poſitively aſſert, it not being mentioned by Virgil, Varro, Servius, or by any of the poets or commentators; and indeed, the inveſtigation is not of any great utility towards the illuſtrating of that paſſage. What I have ſaid already, is ſufficient to reconcile it, and entirely anſwers the end of my writing; there not being any of the parts of the Plough that are mentioned by Virgil, which are not entirely illuſtrated. Perhaps the chief reaſon we cannot ſo clearly underſtand the work at the ſide, is from the Plough being repreſented in ſuch bad perſpective; for if we take a right view, not only of this Plough, but alſo of their paintings and ſculpture in general, we ſhall clearly ſee that the Romans were almoſt totally ignorant of that ſcience; for the dentalia, which is repreſented perpendicularly in the plate, was certainly intended to be horizontally, ſo that the teeth by ſloping downwards, might act upon the clods after the manner of a harrow, otherwiſe it could be of little or no uſe; and the upper end which appears to be faſtened to the ſide, ſhould in my opinion have been faſtened to the middle of the croſs-bar that joins the double back. If that was not the caſe, it could not properly be ſaid to be faſtened to it; and on the other hand,

hand, it would be of no uſe at the ſide; for if every thing was placed on one ſide, what could ſupport the other? Now, if in the middle, as it moſt undoubtedly was intended by the poet, then it might ſupport both ſides. Perhaps ſome may ſay, that we have but one ſide of the Plough, and that there might be the ſame ſupports on the one ſide as on the other; to which I anſwer, that even this does not juſtify the faſtening the dentalia to the ſide, for then there muſt be two dentalia and two plough-ſhares, which ſuppoſition would render the dentalia uſeleſs, and quite unfit for the purpoſe for which it was firſt inſtituted; for if the dentalia was placed perpendicular, it could not have any power to break the clods, or at leaſt very little; and conſequently two dentalia conſtructed upon ſuch a principle, could not be of half the ſervice as one placed horizontally: And it muſt be ſuppoſed that Virgil, who was a man well ſkilled in huſbandry, would not have recommended one of ſuch an aukward ſhape in preference to all others; and indeed if it was formed after this conſtruction, I cannot conceive how there could be a worſe.

I have now finiſhed my deſcription as well as compariſon of the antique Plough, with that deſcribed in the Georgics, as far as lies in my power; and I think upon a cloſe examination, you will find my deſcription will entirely agree with that in the Georgics. I ſhall now endeavour to ſhew how much other critics have err'd, in attempting to reconcile other Ploughs with Virgil's; I ſhall therefore give their deſc iptions

and

and compariſons, and then my objections, that the world may ſee at one view how far I am right in my conjectures. I have, ſays Mr. Spence, a drawing of an antique Plough from a braſs figure in the Jeſuits college at Rome; I don't know the exact time, or place in which it was made, but every part of it ſeems to me to have ſomething to anſwer in Virgil's deſcription: The figure of it is annexed. I take all the bending part of the wood, or plough-tail marked *a* to be what Virgil calls buris, *b* the pole or temo, *c* the two pieces that go over the necks of the oxen which he calls aures, *d* the plough-ſhare, dentale, *e* the two clouts of iron to faſten the plough-ſhare, dorſa, and *f* the handle of the Plough or ſtiva.




Although at the firſt glance, there may appear ſome agreement between its parts and that deſcribed in the Georgics, yet if we take a nearer view, we ſhall find that they are not at all the ſame. I ſhall not begin with that part which he calls buris, merely becauſe it has a bent form, and perhaps may ſeem at firſt appearance

pearance to have ſome affinity with that in Virgil's deſcription; nor yet with temo, becauſe all poles may be ſaid to bear a compariſon with each other. But I ſhall begin with the two pieces that go over the necks of the oxen, which he calls aures. Now the Romans had a method of calling every thing according to its appearance; thoſe things that had the reſemblance of wings, or horns, were always mentioned by thoſe names, becauſe of their affinity to them, like the wings of an army which were always called by them cornua, or alæ, and not aures; and in my opinion Virgil would not have named any parts of his Plough aures, if they had not been more of the ſhape of ears than theſe are, for they do not appear to have the ſhape of ears at all. Again, in Mr. Spence's Plough, the ſhare or dentale, has, manifeſtly but one point, and Virgil ſpeaks in the plural number; conſequently it cannot be that dentalia which Virgil means: Beſides, it is plain that if Virgil had meant it for a plough-ſhare, he never would have called it vomer in one place and dentalia in another. As for the two clouts of iron which Mr. Spence calls dorſa, I cannot conceive upon what foundation he can raiſe that conjecture, although dorſum in different claſſic writers has various and different meanings, yet it never ſignifies a clout of iron in any of them; and I never ſhall be perſuaded that two clouts of iron can ever ſignify a double back. The laſt thing that he deſcribes is the plough handle, which he calls ſtiva; but although his plough handle has its uſe in guiding the Plough, yet it can by no means be ſaid to turn it. Now ſince

it manifeſtly appears that moſt parts of his Plough, if I may be allowed to call it ſuch, do by no means bear any compariſon with Virgil's: There can be no occaſion to bring any proofs againſt its two firſt parts, namely buris and temo, for it plainly appears it cannot be that Plough which Virgil ſeems ſo earneſtly to recommend; and in my opinion, it has more the appearance of an Anchor than that of a Plough. I have known many very ſenſible and ingenious perſons to have given it that appellation, and indeed perhaps not unjuſtly; they were of opinion, that a rope or chain was faſtened to that part which he calls aures, and a ſhorter tied to the former, faſtened at the other end to the ſtiva, to keep the ſhook in the poſition repreſented in the plate, that it might catch at the bottom of the ſea; how far their opinions are juſt in that point, I leave for the reader to determine. Thus, I have finiſhed my objections againſt Mr. Spence's deſcription, I ſhall therefore now begin with Mr. Martyn's: "Continuo in ſylvis, here the poet gives us a "deſcription of the Plough, in which we find the "cuſtom was to bend an elm as it grew, into "the crooked form of the buris or plough-tail, "to which the beam, the earth-board, and "ſhare-beam were faſtened. In the firſt place, "the elm is forcibly bent in the woods into a "plough-tail, and receives the form of the "crooked Plough; to the end of this are joined "a beam of eight feet in length, two earth-"boards, and ſhare-beams with a double back. "The light lime tree is cut down beforehand "for the yoke, and the tall beech, and the

" ſtaff to turn the bottom of the carriage be-
" hind, and the wood is hung up in the chim-
" nies to be ſeaſoned by the ſmoke." Temo,
" This is the beam or pole that goes between
" the oxen to which they are yoked, Heſiod
" calls it ιϛοβοὲυς derived from ιϛὸς a maſt and βοὺς,
" an ox. He ſays it is made either of bay or
" elm, Δαφνης δὴ πτέλες αχιώτατοι ιϛοβοῆες. Aures. Theſe
" muſt be the earth-boards, which being placed
" on each ſide of the ſhare-beams, ſerve to
" make the furrows wider, and the ridges
" higher. Palladius tells us, that ſome Ploughs
" had earth-boards, and others not. Aratra
" ſimplitia, vel ſi plana regio permittit, au-
" ritæ, quibus poſſint contra ſtationes humoris
" hyberni, fata celſiore ſulco attolli, duplici
" aptantur dentalia dorſo. Dentalia is the
" ſhare-beam, a piece of wood to which the
" ſhare is fixed; but why they are ſaid to have
" a double back, ſeems not to be ſo clear:
" The commentators generally agree that by
" double is meant broad, and quote ſome au-
" thority for this interpretation. Servius in-
" deed tells us, that moſt of the plough-ſhares
" in Italy have a wing on each ſide." " Cujus
" utrumque eminet latus: nam fere hujuſmodi
" ſunt omnes vomeres in Italia." " On this
" account, Virgil might have called the ſhare
" double; but why the board ſhould be ſaid
" to have a double back, I don't readily com-
" prehend. A paſſage in Heſiod ſeems to be
" of ſome uſe in removing this difficulty: It
" is agreed on all hands, that Virgil had He-
" ſiod's Plough before him when he made this
" deſcription,

" deſcription. The Greek poet ſpeaking of
" γύης, which all interpret dentale; ſays, it is
" faſtened to the plough-tail, and at the ſame
" time nailed to the pole:

" Φέρειν δὲ γύην ὅτ' ἂν ἔυρης,
" Εἰς ὄικον, κατ' ὄρος διζημενος ἢ κατ' ἄρυραν,
" Πρίνινον, ὅς γαρ βεσιν ἀροῦν ὀχυρώταλός ἐστιν,
" Εὖτ ἄν Αθηναιὴς δῶος ἐν ἐλύμαῖε πῆξας,
" Γόμφοισιν πελάσας προσαρήρεται ἰσοδοῆϊ.

" Now if we ſuppoſe the dentale or ſhare-
" beam to have been made with two legs, one
" of which was faſtened to the bottom of the
" tail, and the other nailed to the beam, which
" would make all three hold faſter together;
" it will eaſily appear, that he means theſe two
" legs, by his duplex dorſum. Heſiod ſpeaks
" of two ſorts of Ploughs, one with the plough-
" tail and ſhare-beam of one piece, and an-
" other where they are joined; he adviſes to
" have two in readineſs, if one ſhould break,
" the other ſhould be at hand."

" Δοιὰ δὲ θεοθαι ἄροτραι πονησαμενος καῖα ὄικον
" Αὐτογύον κὴ πηκτόν ἐπεὶ πολὺ λώϊον οὕτως
" Εἰχετερον γαξα ς ἕτερον γέπὶ βεσι βάλοιο.

" The altaque fagus, ſtivaque. Stiva is the
" plough-ſtaff, which with us is generally fixed
" to the ſhare-beam, in the ſame manner as
" the buris, or tail, ſo that we have two tails
" or handles to our Ploughs; but ſometimes
" it is a looſe ſtaff, with a hook at the end,
" with which the plough-man takes hold of
" the back part of the Plough to turn it. The

" grammatical conſtruction of this paſſage does
" not ſeem very clear. Cæditur is made to
" agree with tilea, fagus, and ſtiva; we may
" ſay tilea cæditur, and fagus cæditur; but to
" ſay at the ſame time ſtiva cæditur, ſeems to
" be abſurd; for it makes the ſtaff a tree, by
" coupling it with lime and beech. Beſides,
" que quæ coming cloſe together offend the
" ear; and I believe there is not another in-
" ſtance of their coming together any where
" in Virgil. I believe, inſtead of ſtivaque, we
" ought to read ſtivæ, which will make
" the ſenſe clearer and the verſe better.

" Cæditur & tilia ante jugo levis, altaque fagus
" Stivæque currus a tergo torqueat fagus imos."

" The light lime-tree is alſo cut down be-
" forehand for the yoke, and the tall beech
" for the ſtaff to turn the bottom of the car-
" riage behind: The Bodlean manuſcript has,
" ſtivaque currus." Currus, " I don't know
" whether any edition juſtifies the alteration I
" have made in this line, from currus to curſus;
" the reaſon of my doing it is, becauſe curſus
" is intelligible, and explains the uſe of the
" handle or plough-ſtaff; curſus torqueat imos,
" the handle ſerves to keep the Plough up,
" which otherwiſe would run down too deep
" in the ground. Mr. Dryden finding this
" paſſage difficult to explain, has left it quite
" out of his tranſlation; all that the commen-
" tators have ſaid in this place concerning cur-
" rus is very perplexed."

" Mr. B——

" Mr. B—— the poet, is thought by ſome,
" to mean a wheel-plough by the word currus,
" which is derived from curro to run; and
" Servius informs us, that in Virgil's country,
" the Ploughs run upon wheels. We have
" wheel-ploughs in many parts of England."
" Explorat. " The King's, the Bodlean, and
" one of the Arundelian manuſcripts have ex-
" ploret. Servius, Lacerda, and Schrevelius
" have the ſame reading; Pierius ſeems will-
" ing to admit exploret, though at the ſame
" time, he ſays, it is explorat in the Roman
" manuſcript, and in the very ancient oblong
" one. Henſius and Ruæus reads explorat;
" it is the ſame in the other Arundelian, the
" Cambridge, and both Dr. Mead's manu-
" ſcripts."

" I have here inſerted the figure of a mo-
" dern Italian Plough, which ſeems to differ
" but little from that which Virgil has deſcrib-
" ed. It ſeems to have no ſtiva diſtinct from
" the buris; and it has a coulter, which Vir-
" gil does not mention; and indeed, Pliny,
" who deſcribes the coulter, ſeems to ſpeak as
" if it was not in all Ploughs. Vomerem plura
" genere culter vocatur, prædenſam priuſquam,
" proſeindatur, terram ſecans fulturiſque ſulcis
" veſtigia præſcribans in ciſuris, quas reſupinus
" in arando mordeat vomer."

Timo
Cuber
Vomer
Dente
Buris
Aures

Now I think Mr. Martyn quite wrong in his conjectures concerning the buris: Firſt, he ſays, the cuſtom was to bend an elm into the crooked form of the buris, which he calls the plough-tail; in my opinion the plough-tail is too ſmall to take up a whole elm in making it. Virgil ſays, that it receives the form of the crooked Plough:

" Et curvi formam accepit ulmus aratri,"

Making it appear either the whole Plough, or at leaſt the principal part; perhaps he may have this plea for calling it the plough-tail, from poets having a licence of putting a part for the whole; but then they generally make uſe of the principal part, as curvæ carinæ, crooked keels for crooked ſhips. If this was not the caſe, the Plough could not be ſaid to be crooked, but only the plough-tail; for there is no other part here mentioned to be crooked, excepting the buris, which Mr. Martyn erroneouſly applies to the plough-tail alone; for what ſenſe can there be in ſaying, that the plough-tail receives the form of the crooked plough, when the buris is the only part mentioned to be bent. And again he ſays, to the end of this is joined a beam of eight feet in length; and Virgil ſays, a ſtirpe, from the bottom; two quite oppoſite expreſſions. He alſo affirms, that temo is the beam or pole that goes between the oxen to which they are yoked: His firſt error of ſuppoſing it to be joined to the end, leads him into this groſs miſtake. Again, he imagines that Virgil means two earth-boards,

by

by the word aures, and quotes Palladius upon the ſame ſubject, who tells us that ſome Ploughs had earth-boards and others not. "Aratra ſimplitia vel ſi plana regio permittit auritæ quibus poſſint contra ſtationes humoris hyberni, &c." Here does not ſeem to be the leaſt proof that Virgil means earth-boards, as the ſignification of aures, for by telling us that ſome Ploughs had earth-boards and others not, he doth by no means aſſure us that Virgil's Plough had earth-boards. He alſo informs us, that the dentalia is the ſhare-beam, a piece of wood to which the ſhare is fixed. I own that the plough-ſhare is faſtened to the dentalia, but I never will allow it to be a beam ſolely appropriated for that purpoſe; for if it was, from whence would it derive its name? But he confeſſes himſelf, that he cannot ſo clearly underſtand what is meant by the dentalia having a double back; and indeed, I don't know how he ſhould underſtand a thing that never was; for Virgil does not ſay that the dentalia has a double back, but that it is faſtened to the double back. Mr. Martyn alſo tells us, that moſt commentators agree, that by double is meant broad; this indeed ſeems to me to be one of the moſt ridiculous opinions that ever was promulgated, and a diſgrace to thoſe who endeavour to defend it; for one back, let it be ever ſo broad, can never ſignify more than one; the width will never increaſe the number, and conſequently double muſt ſignify two. Mr. Martyn cites a paſſage of Servius, where he tells us, that moſt of the plough-ſhares in Italy have a wing on each ſide: "Cujus utrumque

"eminet

eminet latus nam fere hujuſmodi ſunt omnes vomeres in Italia." There being moſt of them made ſo in his time, does not in the leaſt prove that they were made ſo in Virgil's. Again, he remarks, that all agree Virgil had Heſiod's Plough before him when he made this deſcription, which opinion I abſolutely deny; for to ſay he had his Plough before him, is aſſerting he copied him; and indeed is it likely, that Heſiod's Plough ſhould not have been known to the Romans before, amongſt whom the Greek language was as converſant as French is amongſt us; and according to this hypotheſis, Virgil's deſcription would be little more than a tranſlation from the Greek; and I ſhould be very apt to think that Heſiod's deſcription had been tranſlated by ſome of the learned Romans before, amongſt whom the Greek tongue had been known long before Virgil's time; and at this rate he would even be deprived of the honour of a tranſlation.*



* It has been objected by ſome, that every other dialect was entirely diſregarded by the Romans excepting the Attic, and that Heſiod, who wrote in the Doric, might at the ſame time lie buried in obſcurity; the Romans being at that time a polite nation, not troubling themſelves with ſuch a low ruſtic dialect; the mind of man is ever ſearching after novelty, and let the works of any author, if they contain what is uſeful or beneficial, be buried in a language ever ſo mean and deſpicable, the literati will always learn that language for the ſake of underſtanding the author, and would convey his thoughts to the reſt of the public in a tranſlation; for is it likely, that we who live in an age too far remote, ſhould ſtudy the Doric dialect, and that thoſe who lived at the time when it flouriſhed, ſhould leave it entirely neglected, And in a ſpecial manner if it contained an account of a Plough which was of ſuch great importance; beſides, the Doric dialect was not without its beauties, for

But let us conſider what motive Virgil had in writing his Georgics: Was it to inform the ruſtics of things they already knew? Surely there would have been very little utility in this. Then it certainly muſt have been to inſtruct them in thoſe maxims of which they were entirely ignorant; for it is certain he meant his poem for inſtructions, as well as to be admired for its beauty. As for the word γυης, which Mr. Martyn ſays, all interpret dentale; it ſignifies nothing more than the wood into which the ſhare is faſtened, which was ſimilar to the Roman dentalia in every ſhape, excepting it wanted the three points at the lower end. The Greeks, as far as I can underſtand, not having any thing of this kind to break the clods previous to the harrowing, and the grounds upon which I raiſe this conjecture is, that the word γυης is never in the plural number, for γυης is derived from γυα, which ſignifies foſſa; which interpretation ſeems applicable to the groove into which the plough-ſhare is faſtened. Mr. Martyn quotes a paſſage in Heſiod, where the Greek poet ſpeaking of γυης, ſays it is faſtened to the plough-tail, and at the ſame time nailed to the pole. Mr. Martyn cites this paſſage, for the ſake of ſtrengthening his own baſeleſs argument: For he ſuppoſes the dentalia to be made with two legs, one

for if it had been, I do not imagine that Homer would have made choice of it in ſome parts of his Iliad. And can any reaſonable man ſuppoſe Virgil to have been the firſt of the Romans that underſtood that dialect, which he evidently muſt have been, if the objection above-mentioned has any weight, or can it be ſuppoſed that a dialect ſo exceedingly ruſtic, began firſt to be learnt in an age ſo polite as Virgil's.

one of which was faſtened to the bottom of the tail, and the other nailed to the beam, which two legs he endeavours to make appear to ſignify the double back. Strange ideas, would one think that ſuch could enter the thoughts of a critical man? For although the Greek poet ſays, that the γυης is nailed to the plough-tail, and then to the beam or pole, yet he does not any where mention two legs for that purpoſe. The following certainly muſt be the moſt rational conſtruction that can be put upon the ſentence; that one end was faſtened to the pole towards the head, or rather to the croſs bar that joins the double back, and the lower end to the bottom of the buris. But in my opinion, the word ιτοβοευς which is derived from ιτος and βους an ox, does not identically ſignify a pole that goes between the oxen, but any ſtraight piece of wood to which the oxen are faſtened; and in my opinion it is more likely to ſignify its being faſtened to the croſs-bar than to the pole or ſide, which makes this part of Heſiod's Plough entirely coincide with that which I have already deſcribed, excepting it had not three points. Now the principal reaſon of all the confuſion that our commentators have made concerning the dentalia, is, that they have confounded the Greek word γυης with the Roman dentalia, tranſlating them both into the ſingular number, when the Greeks always uſed γυης in the ſingular, and the Romans always uſed dentalia in the plural.* And the reaſon is ob-

 vious,

* Excepting in one paſſage in Pliny's Natural Hiſtory, where he mentions ſeveral kinds of Ploughs, and in one he particularly

vious, becauſe they were both uſed in a different manner; the one being merely a ſhare-beam for the uſe of holding the ſhare, the other uſed both for the ſhare and breaking the clods at the ſame time. The alteration which he has made, in changing ſtiva for ſtivæ, ſeems very clear; and in this paſſage he ſhews his great erudition and critical knowledge. But I entirely differ with him in his opinion of changing currus to curſus; and the reaſon he gives for his doing it, is its being moſt intelligible, and explaining the uſe of the plough-handle: The reaſon of his making this obſervation, is his not underſtanding the uſe of the Roman ſtiva; for it was not to keep the plough-ſhare from runing too deep in the earth, but for the ſake of turning the Plough when it came to the end of the furrow. And indeed I cannot think which way he can thus make a tranſlation of the ſentence; for torqueat, can never ſignify, to keep up the Plough, but always to twiſt or turn it. He ſays, that Mr. Dryden finding this paſſage difficult, has left it quite out of his tranſlation; and I think he had better have taken his example, than to have made ſuch nonſenſe as he has of a paſſage which he was ſo unable to comment on, upon account of his being ſo unacquainted

particularly deſcribes the dentale in the ſingular number; perhaps it might be the old Græcian Plough, then kept in uſe in ſome places, and he, ſuppoſing that part which we call the ſhare-beam, to have an exact reſemblance to Virgil's dentalia, except it wanting three points at the lower end, and therefore concluded it the propereſt, to call it dentale, in the ſingular number: Excepting this paſſage, I do not know that it is mentioned in the ſingular number in any claſſic author; but he certainly never intended it to anſwer any part of Virgil's deſcription.

quainted with that Roman cuſtom. Mr. Martyn tells us in his commentary, ſome thought Mr. B—— the poet, meant a Wheel Plough, by the word currus; and I think he had better have kept to their opinion, than to have made one of his own; for if he had, he certainly would have come nearer to the poet's meaning, whether it ſhould be explorat or exploret; it matters not, it may be either; and indeed it is impoſſible to determine, unleſs we could have a manuſcript that was either written by Virgil, or elſe under his inſpection. I ſhould be inclinable to think it explorat, it being thus inſcribed in the oblong and Roman manuſcripts, which are by far the moſt ancient: But if we take a curſory view of Mr. Martyn's deſcription, we ſhall find every thing unſettled and undetermined; for firſt, he endeavours to reconcile a modern Italian Plough, with the deſcription in the Georgics; and as ſoon as a drawing arrived in a letter from a friend, of one quite different in it's ſhape, he endeavours to reconcile the latter with as much ardour as he did the former; and if this is the beſt way of ſettling the matter, we may compare every Plough that is uſed in England, with that in Virgil's deſcription.

FINIS.